592 comparable to what our law defines as a family. In fact, the
601 four terms just discussed, ton', ba-denya, gwa, and so, are
596 all used for the purpose. It is what is intended by their use that gives them their meaning, and depending on the region, each term has a meaning made precise by usage.

592 The dwelling of the Bambara family usually includes a fairly large number of huts of various kinds. Some are
342 cylindrical and built of native masonry with a conical straw roof and, for a door, a slit or opening which does not extend all the way to the ground. Others are parallelepiped, made of native masonry, and ordinarily also provided with no opening except the door.

Shelters (gwa), consisting of flat straw roofs supported on forked sticks, are usually placed haphazardly or wherever the master of the house wants them and are certainly not governed by any traditional rules or fixed orientation. All these dwellings or out-buildings are enclosed by either a clay wall or an unbroken hedge whose two ends are supported by the walls
[343] of the hut called blon' which serves as a vestibule for the establishment.

[178] The altar of the ancestors and of the household gods is found in the blon'.

The houses of notables are somewhat more elaborately arranged: instead of a single inner court, there are two, three, or even more, sometimes graduated in extent. The master arranges his people in such a way as to divide into sections the heterogeneous elements gathered together under his protection.
592 The domestic servants and the young [161] men, the women, girls, and small children, and finally the eventual successor are, as it were, fenced apart in their own blocks of dwellings, while the fa himself is to be found in impressive isolation, which lends weight to his authority.

592 Among great personages, especially among heads of clans, this arrangement is the rule, and their isolation deep in
712 the interior is virtually a security measure. In the old days a kind of fortress or redoubt, the tata, was built in the center of the royal residence. Gunpowder, weapons, and all the means of defense were kept there, and it was no easy matter to capture

596 614 honored by the new fa, and there is nothing to prevent him from adding to the treasure.

769 The basic cult of the family is the cult of the ancestors. Although the dead are frequently buried outside the family residence, their souls are thought to live in the blon' of the dwelling. The blon' is a hut with two openings on opposite sides, one to the street and the other to the interior, usually the courtyard. It is impossible to enter or leave a house without going through the blon', where there is always a guard, at least in important houses. The ancestors are usually represented in the blon' by a group of crude, conical clay figures of a man and woman, the latter identifiable by the exaggerated breasts. Sometimes the symbol of the dead is a small board about a meter long, twenty centimeters wide, and a little more than a centimeter thick; at one of its extremities a slight protuberance vaguely suggests a head, a kind of ellipsoidal cylinder with eyes, nose, mouth, and chin faintly carved on one side. On the side with the face, the board has a checkerboard pattern, often of alternating black and red squares, probably to indicate the material of a loincloth. The lower extremity of the figure has a semicircular portion cut away to give the effect of legs spread apart when the effigy is set up.

[343 592] 778 769

769 782 778 Whatever form it may have, the representation of the dead is called kara (1) and serves in some manner as an altar

1. In Soninké, kara means "to die" and "death."

on which libations are poured and to which are attached the remains of the sacrifices made to the dead (su-u). Nevertheless, it is also a very widespread practice to make libations and sacrifices before the door of the blon' and, more rarely, before the door of an inner hut. In this case the liquid is poured and the remains smeared on the vertical edge of the opening. This practice is based on the belief that the souls of the dead ancestors like to return to the place where the fa liked to sit during his lifetime. Undoubtedly, the ancestors are regarded as guardians of the threshold; they are [181] honored as such because it is believed that they prefer to be honored in this way.

[775]

342 shovel. A coping of bricks is then laid out around the roof, leaving room for the gutters which spill into the streets. These houses may be topped with a second roof, a thatched cone. The four chief timbers are set at the four angles of the house. There is a door in the first ceiling, and precious goods or objects are kept in this part of the house. As in the round huts, the door always opens to the south.

The outside of the houses are plastered with earth mixed with [237] cow dung; on the inside, the floor and lower part of the walls are daubed with black earth mixed with fresh cow manure and bark from [824] the jumbo tree (Napoleona Heudelotii); the upper walls and the ceiling are covered with white river clay. Where the two colors meet, [531] lines of festoons traced with the finger symbolize the descent of the third Word. On the white walls are painted ladders, calabash spoons, animsla, signs conveying [102] the worldly situation of the owner as well as the soul of the artist.

[356] The periphery of the entrance door is daubed with fresh cow [769] dung every 15 days, and more liberally with rotted cow dung once a year before the rains. This custom is linked to ancestor worship.

Canari [earthenware vessels] containing certain plants are 353 buried under the bed of the head of the family; other plants and 352 juice from roots are hidden under the women's beds. The boli are hooked to the roofing of the houses for they must touch neither earth, water, nor fire. Nets, diakumadjulu, are hung from the ceiling; they hold clothes or calabashes for the food; mats or animal skins are spread on the ground; beds, different-sized calabashes, and stools complete the furnishings. The different huts belonging to one family 351 are surrounded by a wall that opens into the vestibule of a hut with 342 two doors, oriented north-south. This is where the head of the family receives strangers. In the inside court are found hearths made [354] of three stones, mortars for millet, and chicken coops, a sort of small square hut made of clay mixed with straw. The granaries, 343 constructed on piles, have the form of round huts. They are divided 251 into four parts, where the four principal grains are kept: millet, rice, fonio, ground nuts. Some grains may be kept together in the same compartment, for example, millet and ground nuts. Certain granaries, bonio, are veritable cigar-shaped pots made by the blacksmiths' wives. When the bonio is finished, it is cut into sections

343 which are dried. Then it is reassembled without sealing the pieces
251 together, and as the level of the provisions goes down, the unnecessary sections are taken off. The kitchens are situated to the west of the rooms.

342 Arrangement of the huts in a concession. The chief's hut is
361 always to the east, for he must see the sun rise. His hut is often quadrangular and has several rooms. The women's huts are generally round; each has its kitchen situated to the west and closed by a separate lock. Private shower rooms are reserved for husbands and
[514] wives. Privy cabinets with two holes, one for urine and one for stool, are stopped up and condemned when they are full.

312 Finally, the well is sunk in the middle of the court or else in the immediate proximity of the concession. Water is drawn directly with a calabash fixed to a long rope.

342 Sometimes individual huts are constructed on piles for protection against mosquitoes at night; the only opening is a trap door in the floor by which the hut is entered.

g. Tombs

764 An old custom had the family heads buried in their huts. The Fama were buried in the courts of their fortified palaces, to the northwest. Babies were buried near their mothers' huts, for their return was awaited. At the present time the Bambara are buried in cemeteries following Moslem or animist custom.

[767] [103] The brotherhood priests dig the graves; tombs may be individual or collective. Monteil (Les Bambara du Ségou et du Kaarta [The Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta]) describes a chief's tomb: the vault has the form of a parallelepiped; the lower base is one meter wide and two long, the upper base three wide and two long, and a vertical partition of 1. 50 meters forms a right angle with the bases.

In Ouassoulou the custom was to dig a common tomb of several chambers for the whole family. A square entrance about two meters high and two wide led into a narrow corridor that opened on a first chamber reserved for children; another corridor connected the first chamber with a second, larger one reserved for women and for adult males; from this a third corridor led to a last chamber, a smaller one for heads of the family. An oil lamp was placed at the

764 during the night that precedes the burial in front of the corpse which is displayed in the court, and again during the night that follows the burial. The djansa is performed once in the morning and once in the afternoon for three days running. The members of the family, men and women, arrive in Indian file, singing in low tones; they form a ring and circle to the sound of the music. From time to time they throw out a few cowrie shells, and the children, who have come in large numbers for the occasion, scramble after them. On leaving, each places his offering on the ground near the chief musician.

At the cemetery near a fresh grave many feathers, a remnant of ashes, and a few small, carefully picked bones are to be seen. One imagines a sacrifice, but there has been none. The youths who dig the grave receive a hen in payment, and it is a gift from the deceased. For this reason, incidentally, it is given to them dead, after an old man has cracked its skull against the wall of the b'lon, or entry hut.

The grave is dug; the children of the deceased are all present (2), and he is about to be buried. The corpse is wrapped in a mat

2. All the children and grandchildren must be there, and in fact they all come unless it is absolutely impossible to do so. Except for a case of emergency, people sometimes wait one to three days to allow everyone to be present.

• 343 and then laid under the goua, a coarse shelter that casts a little shade at the entrances of the dwellings, and through the mediation of the one in charge of the funeral ceremony, almost always a sorcerer, those present pay their respects /220/ to the deceased and offer him a few cowrie shells. Children and grandchildren, each in turn, accuse themselves of lack of consideration and respect in their conduct and ask pardon. Strangers also come and beg the deceased not to be angry, not to wish them ill, and all one hears is the voice of the herald crying: "Pardon, do not be angry, we loved you and respected you, be happy during your stay in Lahara (kingdom of invisible beings)."